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This pamphlet on the role of elementary school guidance was designed for use by individuals affiliated with the elementary school. Because the school is developmental rather than selective, every member of the school staff must possess skills to adapt experiences to meet the student's needs. The study of children is an essential skill involving: (1) knowledge of the scientific principles affecting human development, (2) factual information about the child; and (3) the continuous development, by school personnel, of the skills of the scientific method of solving problems. The needs of exceptional children must be met within the framework of their differences In facilitating the teaching-learning experience, the teacher is assisted by the following specialized personnel involved in the guidance program (1) the psychologist, (2) the counselor, (3) the school social worker, and (4) the school administrator. Major trends in elementary school guidance are discussed relative to (a) the services needed in elementary school districts, and (b) some needed guidance programs. Ideas for use in evaluating guidance services throughout the school are summarized in terms of the duties of the school staff and the guidance specialist. (PS)

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ELEMENTARY INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICE

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GUIDANCE IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Staff, Division of Research and Guidance, Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools Office

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The education of children has been a major concern of every civilization, but probably at no other period have so many adults recognized that the events of childhood determine each person's future and consequently the destiny of our nation.

Undoubtedly, most important in a child's environment are the people who guide and teach him. It is through relationships with them that a child comes to view himself and the world about him. As children grow up, they need not only facts but also attitudes that will carry them through the stresses and strains of life without undue peril.

Recognizing the uniqueness of each child, schools are extending their facilities for child study and guidance. Many facilities and specialized personnel provide for the continuous study of each child.

RESPONSIBILITIES TO SOCIETY

The maximum development of *every* citizen's potentialities is the paramount goal of public education in the United States. The people of the United States have repeatedly insisted that their schools serve all the children of all people. Schools are, therefore, no longer *selective*, eliminating those who do not qualify for certain learnings, but *developmental*, providing experiences adapted to the individual needs of all children.

As schools strive to attain these goals and to serve all children and youth, the need for guidance activities steadily increases. Guidance helps teachers to understand the needs and abilities of individual children and to utilize the dynamics of learning so that each child realizes his potential. Guidance concepts also aid the teachers' efforts to develop mentally healthy and well-adjusted personalities. A democratic society requires that every citizen realize his capacities, learn to live harmoniously with others, participate effectively in the economy, and accept his civic responsibilities. The public schools have the responsibility to produce citizens of this type, but society in turn has the responsibility to encourage the efforts of its schools with adequate financial and moral support.

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Guidance is a "built-in" part of all education. To know each child and to adapt experiences to meet his needs are skills which are essential for every member of the school staff.

Some techniques for the study of individuals and groups, however, have become extremely specialized. Trained personnel are required for the wise use of these tools and for the interpretation of the results to the teacher. Many provisions to meet the "out-of-step" child's needs also demand technical expertness.

School psychologists, counselors, social workers, and other specialists direct their efforts to helping teachers learn the special techniques which lead to increased understanding of children. They work with teachers in intensive study of and planning for children with special needs. School psychologists also play a key role in coordinating the staff's efforts in guidance.

STUDY OF CHILDREN AN ESSENTIAL SKILL

Three essentials are involved in understanding children. One is *knowledge of the scientific principles* affecting human development.

The following principles are to be considered in guiding children:

- Behavior is caused and is continuously influenced by multiple, complex, and interrelated forces. A child's behavior, therefore, can be understood only as these influences are understood.
- Each child is unique and unlike any other human being. He needs, therefore, to be studied and understood as an individual.
- Children, however, are alike in many ways, since they have the same basic human needs. As teachers understand the characteristics of their groups, they can plan an appropriate environment and experiences.
- Every child has worth and value. This value relates to his personal uniqueness and to the ideals of our society.

Another essential is *factual information about the individual child*—his life experiences, his behavior, and his uniqueness. His physical being and development, the emotional climate of his home, the social-cultural influences around him, and the impact of his age-mates must all be considered. Everything a child does is colored by how the child sees himself and believes that others view him.

The third essential is the continuous development of the *skills of the scientific method* of solving problems. In any science, after a problem has been defined, the first step is systematically to collect objective information.

As questions are raised, the making of hypotheses is another step in the scientific method. The hypotheses are checked and tested against the available facts. Additional information is often needed to arrive at valid conclusions and to make tentative plans for action. The results of these plans are considered in the light of new knowledge.

Increasing evidence of the profound uniqueness of human personality emphasizes the demand to adopt multiple ways of learning about children as individuals. Elementary school personnel use a variety of procedures to obtain and use essential information, such as:

- Direct observation and making of objective, accurate anecdotal records of child behavior.
- Conferences with parents and visits to the home.
- Conferences with other significant persons in the child's life, such as teachers, the nurse, principal, psychologist, custodian, club leader, or Sunday school teacher.
- Study of the child's life space, the physical conditions, and social influences which surround him.
- Obtaining creative expressions and products of the child such as stories, paintings, and results of construction.
- Study of all kinds of cumulative school records including tests, inventories, and health histories.
- Informal conversations with the individual child.

The psychological study of a child who is experiencing learning and/or behavior difficulties utilizes the above procedures intensively.

Putting this information to work in the school involves both grouping for a variety of instructional purposes and the use of teaching procedures derived from the unique characteristics of each child. Within this framework there are many tested activities, such as:

- Using in-service activities to sensitize teachers to children's needs and to help them become more effective in guidance.
- Providing individual and group counseling and guidance services for all children.
- Motivating and evaluating children's learning experiences.
- Providing specialized services for children with exceptional needs such as the mentally retarded, physically handicapped, gifted, and those with learning and behavior disorders.
- Incorporating research as an essential part of the program.

- Coordinates evaluation data for individual children and groups.
- Gives leadership to planning and carrying out professional growth activities in guidance and child study.

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GUIDANCE IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Staff
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Los Angeles County
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In addition to the work within the school is the application of guidance information to procedures involving the school with the home and the community. Some of these are—

- Working with parents in evaluating and reporting pupil progress through individual and group conferences.
- Planning programs of parent education and PTA activities.
- Developing community resources so that they may be utilized efficiently and fully.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Some children differ so markedly from the average that they demand special study and planning. A few children may have defective vision, a hearing loss, poor coordination, or some other physical disability. Teachers, parents, or the child himself may not recognize what is hindering him in classroom activities. Some children may be facing serious emotional problems which prevent them from learning effectively or interacting with others constructively. Still other children are limited in environmental background and intellectual development and are at a disadvantage in learning what is generally expected of children the same age.

On the other hand, some children's accelerated intellectual growth and outstanding achievement may challenge the teacher's ingenuity in planning for continued development. A few children may show unusual talent in the arts, an extraordinary grasp of mathematics or scientific concepts, or some other outstanding ability. These children's special needs demand individual study, attention, and planning by the teacher with the help of guidance specialists.

The services of specialists are needed in understanding the child as a person, how he feels about himself, and his relations with others. As a result, teachers and parents can combine their efforts to help meet his individual needs.

Sometimes the child's needs can be met in the classroom if the teacher can make special provisions for him. Other times it may seem best to place him in a special class with a specially trained teacher. In either case, the efforts of home and school are directed toward helping the child accept himself and realize his full potentialities.

The child with special needs is first of all a child with all the needs, hopes, fears, and aspirations of any human being. His needs for affection, recognition, and self-development must be met within the framework of his difference.

PERSONNEL INVOLVED IN GUIDANCE PROGRAM

Although the major focus of guidance activity involves the teacher and the teaching-learning

experience of children in a regular classroom, there are other school personnel who make an effective guidance contribution in the elementary school.

The school's most powerful resources in guiding children are the people on its staff. More important than buildings or supplies are the teachers, administrators, guidance specialists, and others who daily influence the lives of boys and girls. The best and most resourceful person, however, cannot make his full contribution unless he works in harmony with others. Many decisions about ways of studying and guiding children cannot be made effectively by individuals acting alone, whether teachers, psychologists, or administrators.

Group planning for cumulative records of children's development and for a standardized testing program ensures consistency throughout the school. Agreements among the entire staff are essential in grouping children, in evaluating their progress, and in reporting to parents. Special study of individual children involves the skills and knowledge of many people.

With varying degrees of emphasis each member of the school staff carries out some or all of the guidance activities outlined above. The professional and classified staff all form part of a team which has an impact on the adjustment and growth of children.

In facilitating the teaching-learning experience, the teacher deals with all phases of guidance. To do this most effectively he is assisted by certain specialized members of the staff:

- The psychologist makes more intensive studies of individual children and assists teachers and parents, both individually and in groups, to formulate decisions for such children, works with parents and community agencies in a variety of activities, and engages in various educational research activities.
- The counselor counsels children individually and in groups, helps parents and teachers to work with children through individual and group activities, and assists in coordinating all of the guidance activities within the school.
- The school social worker, through specialized social case-work practices, helps parents and teachers to become more aware of each other's role in children's lives and to cooperate more effectively in working for the welfare of children. Through home visits and the coordination of the school's efforts with those of other social agencies, the social worker brings a new dimension to home-school cooperation.
- The school administrator sets the tone and the climate which determine the nature and extent of guidance activities. The principal exhibits leadership skills when he balances his authority role with the role of being a friend of children. The administrator shows an awareness of his guidance role when he exercises great care in selecting classified personnel who will have positive attitudes toward children as well as technical competence. Perhaps the most profound effect, aside from that of the classroom teacher, results from the guidance leadership skills of the school administrator.

TRENDS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GUIDANCE

Economic and social changes have produced unsettled conditions in the American culture which necessitate more highly specialized guidance services. In today's world of automation, overpopulation, and sweeping social change, the individual may find himself lost unless society takes care to foster and protect his uniqueness and self-actualization. He may fall prey to the increasing depersonalization and computerized approach to living which is inherent in our constantly expanding world. Society delegates this role to the schools, and schools in turn to their guidance departments.

Guidance personnel have found that their efforts in helping pupils develop are far more economically performed if those efforts are begun at the elementary level and conscientiously followed up at the secondary level. The objectives of guidance personnel at any school level are to help pupils develop to the maximum level of their potential, intellectually, socially, and emotionally, and to maintain the mental health of both pupils and teachers.

Some of the services needed in elementary school districts are—

1. Pooling of resources of elementary teachers, counselors, psychometrists, school social workers, and school psychologists to study analytically—
   (a) The nature and nurturing of giftedness and special talents in individual children.
   (b) The presence and flowering, under teacher guidance, of creativity in children.
   (c) The budding signs of pupil maladjustments which presage later antisocial conduct that can develop into juvenile delinquency and adult crime.
   (d) The development of warm human relations among all children.

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(e) Awareness of the opportunities and requirements for a satisfactory career.

2. Early discovery of potential school dropouts and the resolution of the attendant academic and social problems which are nurturing the potential.
3. Group and individual counseling and educational guidance for underachievers, the educationally handicapped, and the culturally disadvantaged.
4. Group and individual counseling for all pupils.

Some of the guidance programs needed are—

1. Launching of a national campaign aimed at the public and professional educators to emphasize the necessity for trained, full-time counselors in the nation's elementary schools. This could be under the direction of the American Personnel and Guidance Association and the U.S. Office of Education.
2. Developing preservice training programs for elementary school counselors by state departments of education with the assistance and cooperation of the colleges and professional counseling and guidance organizations.
3. Developing manuals, textbooks, and other instructional materials for the training of elementary school counselors.
4. Developing pilot programs in elementary schools in areas of great need, the effectiveness of such programs to be evaluated in terms of the presence or absence of long-term gains (e.g., reduction of dropout rate and academic failures; decreased occurrence of juvenile delinquency; greater teacher understanding of and sensitivity to student needs in terms of self-realization; earlier discovery of, strengthening of, and catering to student aptitudes, vocational and otherwise; and increased cooperation between the school, the home, and the community).
5. Making available to local administrators and boards of education the information obtained from the pilot programs.

EVALUATING GUIDANCE SERVICES

Every staff member contributes to the accumulation of information necessary for wise guidance of children. In evaluating the effectiveness of guidance services the staff looks especially at the ways in which teachers are given practical help and full support in the classroom. Guidance services are most effective when directly related to day-by-day instruction. Guidance specialists help to coordinate all the separate phases of understanding children, sharing their expertise with all who work with children.

The following summarizes main ideas for use in evaluating guidance services throughout the school:

The School Staff—

- Observes children's behavior in daily situations.
- Uses a variety of methods to study children individually and in groups.
- Takes part in a systematic program of standardized testing.
- Contributes to and uses cumulative records for each child.
- Refers children for special study and guidance conferences when help is needed.
- Recognizes children with exceptional needs and understands the special services provided for them.
- Meets with parents individually and in groups to understand children better and to involve parents in the education of their children.
- Evaluates the growth and learning of children and the effectiveness of the curriculum.
- Works with community personnel and agencies in providing for children's educational and social needs.
- Engages in professional growth activities to deepen understandings of children.

The Guidance Specialist—

- Helps school staff members develop skills in the the use of observation.
- Helps school staff members to use guidance techniques in studying children.
- Assists in planning and carrying out a school-wide testing program and in interpreting the results for the guidance of individuals and groups.
- Aids in formulating policies for cumulative records and recommendations regarding their use.
- Brings specialized skills to studying of individual children and planning for them.
- Makes recommendations for the guidance of exceptional children in classrooms, special classes, and through community agencies.
- Helps school staff members to plan activities with parents and to develop skills in working with parents.